

# To Stay or not to Stay---Voice of Hotel Employees from Glassdoor

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH AIMS

Hotels rely on well-trained employees equipped with good service attitude and skills to delivery high quality service and create memorable experiences to customers (Garlick, 2010). However, the intensive demands of service jobs and low salaries make high employee turnover a major challenge facing the industry (Deery & Shaw, 1999; Simons & Hinkin, 2001).

Researchers have investigated major causes of employee turnover from multiple theoretical perspectives, such as Social Exchange, Maslow's Needs Hierarchy, and Hertzberg's Two-factor (Hsiao, Ma & Auld, 2017). Hertzberg's Two-factor theory suggests that each job needs to be designed to satisfy both internal and external needs/motivations. Job features fulfilling extrinsic needs are named hygiene factors, such as pay and benefits, workplace relationships, work environment, etc. Missing these components would lead to job dissatisfaction of employee. Job features fulfilling intrinsic needs are named motivators, such as the job itself, growth, and achievement and recognition. The presence of these components can lead to can greatly enhance employees' motivation and job satisfaction. Most hospitality frontline jobs are characterized as having poor hygiene factors, and successful hospitality organizations tend to emphasize the motivators to attract talents.

Yet, most employee turnover/retention studies used first-hand empirical data which are relatively small in sample sizes. Majority of research evidence was based on measures of employees' turnover intention, instead of actual turnover decisions (Arnold, Feldman, & Purbhoo, 1985), which are subject to social desirability biases, leading to intention-behavioral gaps (Sheeran, 2002). Hence, investing factors causing actual turnover decision, rather than intention, is an important research direction that worth investigation.

People are relying extensively on internet and social media information when making decisions, including selecting potential employers, and growing number of studies have started to use user generated data from social media platforms (e.g. Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011; Zhang, Ji, Wang & Chen, 2017). Yet existing studies are mostly customer-focused, and there is a scarcity of research utilizing employee-focus social media (e.g. Swain, Saha, Reddy, Rajvanshy, 2020), such as Glassdoor or Fairy God Boss.

To address the research gap, building on Hertzberg's Two-factor Model and using Glassdoor comments shared by employees of leading hotel companies, this study aims to: 1) Identify major hygiene factors and motivators in hotels as well as their performance; 2) Investigate major hygiene factors and motivators' influence on employees' turnover intention.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study used hotel employee comments shared on Glassdoor as main data source. The anonymous nature of comments makes the website an important reference for potential employees to make career-related decisions (White, 2015). In 2020, there are more than 1 million companies with almost 50 million reviews on Glassdoor (Glassdoor for Employer, 2020).

Employee comments of nine leading hotel groups in the world, including Accor, Best Western, Choice, Four Seasons, Hilton, Hyatt, InterContinental, Marriott and Radisson. Total number of original comments were 17,833 and hotels' ratings on Glassdoor ranged from 3.3 to 4.2 (out of 5), with an average rating of 3.91. Data were cleaned and pre-processed through removing punctuations and numbers, converting all texts to lower-case, and stop words. The process retained 17840 comments. Table 1 presents descriptive results of review comments.

Next, LDA modelling, a generative unsupervised approach to model textual data (e.g. Guo, Barnes, & Jia, 2017), was used to extract pattern in reviewing comments. LDA is based on an exchangeability assumption for words and topics in a document: every document is represented by a topic distribution and each topic has an underlying word distribution (Blei, Ng, & Jordan, 2003; Misra et al., 2010). This study uses topic coherence scores to determine topic numbers. In addition, to ensure the interpretability of derived topics, this study also employ manual method to decide the topic numbers. Such combination of manual method and quantitative coherence metrics is known as the elbow method (Kirilenko et al., 2021).

## III. RESULTS

Table 4 Results of LDA-based themes

Pros	No.	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme3	Theme4	Theme 5	Theme6
	1	Company (0.086)	Benefits (0.081)	People (0.101)	Company (0.035)	Marriott (0.077)	Hotel (0.048)
	2	Culture (0.034)	Discounts (0.039)	Nice (0.045)	Move (0.024)	Company (0.034)	Guests (0.025)
	3	Life (0.029)	Hotel (0.031)	Employees (0.037)	Opportunity (0.022)	Learn (0.018)	Employee (0.020)
	4	Benefits (0.028)	Pay (0.027)	Environment (0.030)	Job (0.022)	Opportunities (0.016)	People (0.020)
	5	Management (0.024)	Flexible (0.023)	Benefits (0.030)	Opportunities (0.022)	Hospitality (0.015)	Experience (0.012)
	6	Staff (0.024)	Hours (0.020)	Friendly (0.023)	Growth (0.021)	Easy (0.013)	Management (0.011)
	7	Training (0.023)	Hotels (0.019)	Care (0.020)	Free (0.019)	Industry (0.013)	Amazing (0.011)
	8	Balance (0.021)	Discount (0.019)	Company (0.018)	Grow (0.015)	Environment (0.013)	Location (0.010)
	9	Excellent (0.020)	Time (0.018)	Fun (0.017)	Employee (0.013)	Culture (0.012)	Company (0.009)
	10	Employee (0.013)	Travel (0.016)	Management (0.017)	Management (0.012)	Career (0.011)	Beautiful (0.009)
Cons	No.	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6
	1	Marriott (0.025)	Life (0.043)	Management (0.035)	Pay (0.101)	Management (0.037)	Hours (0.082)
	2	Salary (0.025)	Balance (0.031)	Job (0.023)	Low (0.044)	Employees (0.022)	Time (0.018)
	3	Pay (0.019)	Management (0.030)	People (0.020)	Bad (0.035)	Hotel (0.020)	Hotel (0.018)
	4	Benefits (0.018)	Poor (0.027)	Move (0.018)	Company (0.032)	Company (0.013)	Holidays (0.018)
	5	Low (0.018)	Employees (0.017)	Company (0.017)	Time (0.026)	Property (0.010)	Day (0.017)
	6	Time (0.017)	Managers (0.015)	Staff (0.016)	Management (0.015)	Guests (0.009)	Hard (0.016)
	7	Schedule (0.013)	Hours (0.014)	Hard (0.011)	Hourly (0.010)	People (0.008)	Days (0.013)
	8	Hours (0.011)	Communication (0.013)	Times (0.011)	Experience (0.008)	Job (0.008)	Shifts (0.012)
	9	Position (0.011)	Lack (0.012)	Training (0.011)	Managers (0.007)	Marriott (0.007)	Weekends (0.012)
	10	Hotel (0.011)	People (0.011)	Department (0.009)	Rate (0.007)	Front (0.007)	Week (0.011)

Note: estimates in parentheses denote probability falling into each topic

Table 5 Results of stepwise regression models

		Constant	Employee status as dependent variable
Model 1	Pros theme 3	0.447	0.033***
Model 2	Pros theme 3	0.431	0.040***
	Pros theme 6		0.038***
Model 3	Cons theme 1	0.476	-0.038***

Note: \*\*\*  $P < 0.001$

## IV. CONTRIBUTIONS

The study has three major contributions. First, it looks into actual turnover rather than intention, addressing the call to close the intention-behavior gap. In addition, it extends the applicability of Hertzberg's Two-factor model by using employee reviews on social media and builds link between motivators and hygiene factors' influence on employees' actual leave or stay decisions. Second, it explores both current employees' reasons to stay and former employees' reasons to leave in one study. The comparisons between two groups of employees can shed light on managing employee turnover. Third, the study also has important methodological contribution. Being one of the first few studies using employee-generated data, it opens up opportunities to study hospitality employee's perception, attitude and behaviors using new data source. As employee data are relatively more challenging to obtain compared to customer-generated data, this contribution is particularly significant.

